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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to examine the socialization process of secondary education students becoming teachers. The problem addressed was whether students progressing through a series of field experiences have the same kind of transition process at each stage of a secondary education program. The student teaching journal was used as an investigatory tool to research the problem. Student teachers who participated in the study were among 22 who were student teaching within a 50-mile radius of Indiana State University. Seven themes from a previous study on early field experience socialization were used as a comparison to the socialization process of the student teacher (teaching metaphor, teaching motivation, relationships of teaching, transition to teaching, realities of teaching, reflections on teaching, and teaching practice). The analysis of entries in student teachers' journals revealed definite implications for teacher education programs. (Author/JD)

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THE JOURNAL AS A RESEARCH TOOL: PRE-SERVICE TEACHER SOCIALIZATION

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THE JOURNAL AS A RESEARCH TOOL: PRE-SERVICE TEACHER SOCIALIZATION

Introduction

The student teaching experience is one that many view as the most important experience in the pre-service preparation of teachers (Koehler, 1986). During this experience, a transition occurs in which a student becomes a teacher. This transitional process has been referred to as socialization, however, it has been difficult to pinpoint the moment in the process when a person becomes a teacher.

A foundational study by Bowman (1987) was undertaken to discover what was meaningful to students becoming secondary teachers. A question was raised at the conclusion of the study as to whether students progressing through a series of field experiences have the same kind of transition process at each stage. As a result, the following study set out to discover the transition process of student teachers, and to compare the process to that of early field experience students.

Purpose of the Study

This study was the second step of an ongoing investigation of pre-service teacher socialization using the journal as a research tool. It was undertaken to compare the preceptions of students engaged in early field experiences with those of student teachers to gain an understanding of how students experienced becoming teachers.

Background of the Study

The foundation study was conducted with secondary education students who were participating in a pre-student teaching field experience. The pre-student teachers observed in classes in their field of study and during the semester planned and taught a five-day unit. Fields of study represented were: (a) mathematics, (b) science, (c) music, (d) home economics, (e) foreign language, and (f) history.

Methods of inquiry used for the study were (a) observation, (b) interviews with pre-student teachers and their cooperating teachers, and (c) journals kept by pre-student teachers and the researcher. The journals written by the pre-student teachers followed a specific format which focused on feelings involved in becoming a teacher.

The study yielded seven themes encountered by the pre-student teachers. They were: (a) teaching metaphor, (b) teaching motivation--why teach, (c) relationships of teaching, (d) transition to teaching--neither a student nor a teacher, (e) realities of teaching, (f) reflection of teaching, and (g) teaching practice. Propositions were stated for each theme. With the exception of the theme "teaching motivation--why teach," the themes were identified through an analysis of the journals. The other inquiry methods, while corroborating the journal entries, yielded little additional information.

The propositions stated for each theme are as follows:

A. Teaching Metaphor

1. Pre-student teachers approach teaching metaphori-

cally.

2. Pre-student teachers experience satisfaction with their teaching experience to the degree that they are able to act in conjunction with their teaching metaphor.

B. Relationships of Teaching

1. Pre-student teachers explain how they relate to high school students, cooperating teachers, and other faculty and staff.
2. Pre-student teachers explain how high school students, cooperating teachers, and other faculty and staff relate to them.
3. Pre-student teachers have confidence in themselves as teachers to the degree that students, cooperating teachers, and faculty treat them like their image of teachers.

C. Transition of Teaching--Neither a Student Nor a Teacher

1. Pre-student teacher experience a transition period in which they feel like they are no longer a student and not yet a teacher.

D. Realities of Teaching

1. Pre-student teachers discover some of the realities of the amount of preparation and flexibility involved in teaching.
2. Pre-student teachers discover the reality that a few students and teachers have poor attitudes.

E. Reflection of Teaching

1. Pre-student teachers approach teaching reflectively.
2. Pre-student teachers find the observation of teaching is valuable to them to the extent that they reflect on their observations.
3. Pre-student teachers reflect about the value of observation, teaching practices of the teachers they observe, their own teaching practices, and how high school students learn best.

F. Teaching Practice

1. Pre-student teachers are satisfied with their field experience to the extent that they have opportunity to practice teaching.
2. Pre-student teachers are satisfied with their field experience to the extent that they have opportunity to practice a variety of teaching duties.

Procedures

The six student teachers who participated in the study were among twenty-two who were student teaching in a fifty mile radius of Indiana State University, and supervised by one of the researchers. The student teachers were placed in five secondary schools for a ten week student teaching experience. The subject areas represented in the study were English, business, mathematics, industrial technology education, and physical education with two student teachers in physical education. There were three female and three male student teachers. Each kept a formatted journal (see Appendix A) which was designed to focus

on the theme of becoming a teacher.

The constant comparative method which was established by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and further interpreted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was used to collect and analyze the data. An audit trail was kept to explain the analysis process.

Analysis

In the initial steps of analysis, statements from the student teacher journals were placed on 3 x 5 cards and coded as to the source on the back. Following this unitizing process, each card was examined to discover those that fit the propositions included in each of the six themes from the foundation study, and coded accordingly. Cards which did not fit the established propositions were placed in a pile for further consideration.

It was discovered that all themes and propositions were represented by initial coding. The remaining cards were examined for degree of fit with the six themes. All fit within the established themes but new propositions were needed for their inclusion. The following two themes required no additional propositions: E. Reflection of Teaching, and F. Teaching Practice.

The propositions added to the remaining four themes are as follows:

A. Teaching Metaphor

3. Student teachers found satisfaction in the achievements of their students.
4. Student teachers experienced a metaphor shift.

B. Relationships of Teaching

4. Student teachers experienced attachment to their students.

C. Transition to Teaching--Neither a Student Nor a Teacher

2. Student teachers discover they have authority.
3. Student teachers discover they can manage the classroom without the help of the cooperating teacher.

D. Realities of Teaching

3. Student teachers discover the realities of non-teaching duties.

Discussion

The analysis of the study seems to indicate that secondary education students go through similar transition processes in becoming teachers. As the student teachers recorded this process in their journals, they seemed to experience similar perceptions and feelings as the early field experience students. This was evidenced by the reoccurrence of the six themes discovered in the foundation study with early field experience students. The researchers believe the additional propositions added to the themes were revealed because of the added responsibilities of the student teachers in the classroom.

As the analysis progressed a hypothesis was generated that the process of becoming a teacher is cyclic. Secondary education students will experience the transition of becoming a teacher several times as they progress toward their ultimate

goal of becoming a teacher. This has definite implications for teacher education programs, and the importance of early and continuous field experiences.

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APPENDIX A

JOURNAL FORMAT

Today I felt more like I was becoming a teacher when
(by)...

Today _____ helped me feel more like I was
becoming a teacher when (by)...

My reaction to this was...

Today I didn't feel like I was becoming a teacher when...

My reaction to this was...